



Department of Justice

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ANOTHER INDICTED, ANOTHER PLEADS GUILTY IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA, TO FEDERAL FRAUD CHARGES

BATON ROUGE, LA – Another Louisiana resident was indicted and another pled guilty in federal court yesterday on charges of fraud related to hurricane disaster relief programs, United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced.

CHERYL M. TAYLOR, age 47, of Greensburg, Louisiana, was charged in an indictment by a federal grand jury yesterday with bank fraud. The indictment alleges that TAYLOR fraudulently altered the face of a check issued to her by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for disaster relief benefits so that the check appeared to be payable to her in an amount of \$10,000 more than the true amount of the check. It is further alleged that TAYLOR caused these funds to be deposited into her personal bank account, and later withdrew the funds, knowing that the funds obtained were based on the deposited amount of the FEMA check that she had fraudulently altered. The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General. If convicted, TAYLOR faces a maximum sentence of thirty years imprisonment, a \$1,000,000 fine, or both.

LESLIE A. SMITH, age 31, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, pled guilty yesterday before Chief U.S. District Court Judge Ralph E. Tyson to count one of an indictment charging her with mail fraud. The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. As a result of her guilty plea to count one of the indictment, SMITH faces a maximum sentence of twenty years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, or both. As part of the plea agreement, the U.S. Attorney's Office will dismiss count two of the indictment when SMITH is sentenced on count one.

Yesterday's indictment brings the total number of individuals who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to hurricane disaster relief funds to one hundred thirty.

In September 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force – chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division – includes the FBI, the U.S. Inspectors General community, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Executive Office for United States Attorneys and others.

For further information, contact David R. Dugas, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana, or Lyman Thornton, First Assistant U.S. Attorney, at (225) 389-0443. Anyone suspecting criminal activity involving disaster assistance programs can make an anonymous

report by calling the toll-free Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline, 1-866-720-5721, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until further notice. Information can also be emailed to the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force at HKFTF@leo.gov or sent by surface mail, with as many details as possible, to Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4909.

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